

Message Text

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17-12
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 IO-14 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 SIL-01 LAB-06

OMB-01 DRC-01 /137 W
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R 242021Z JAN 74
FM AMCONSUL BELFAST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 615
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 15

JANUARY 24TH 1974.

E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: PINT U.K. (N.I.)
SUBJECT: N.I. EXECUTIVE WINS PYRRHIC VICTORY OVER LOYALISTS.

SUMMARY LOYALISTS REFUSING TO ALLOW EXECUTIVE TO TAKE FRONT BENCH SEATS WERE FORCEABLY REMOVED FROM ASSEMBLY JANUARY 22. ALL LOYALIST PARTIES WITHDRAW FROM JANUARY 23 SESSION TO AVOID EVEN DE FACTOR RECOGNITION OF EXECUTIVE, WHOSE SUPPORTERS PASSED NEW STANDING ORDER ENPOWERING SPEAKER TO SUSPEND FUTURE UNRULY MEMBERS FOR 14 SITTINGS. LOYALIST ACTIONS OF JANUARY 22 WERE GENERALLY CONDEMNED, AND THEY WERE UNABLE TO CARRY OUT PROMISE TO PREVENT EXECUTIVE FROM WORKING THROUGH PARLIAMENTARY TACTICS. BUT DEGREE OF FORCE REQUIRED TO QUELL THEIR PROTEST, AND THEIR REFUSAL TO PLAY ROLE OF LOYAL OPPOSITION, TEND TO UNDERMINE EXECUTIVES CREDIBILITY AS DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION. AT SAME TIME LOYALIST ABSENTIONISM IN ASSEMBLY IF IT BECOMES A POLICY WILL STRENGTHEN ROLE OF LOYALIST PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS IN CONTINUING EFFORT TO BRING DOWN EXECUTIVE. END SUMMARY.
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1. FOR A FEW DAYS IT HAD SEEMED THAT A ONE-DAY LOYALIST GENERAL STRIKE WOULD COINCIDE WITH OPENING OF NEW SESSION OF ASSEMBLY JANUARY 22. UDA MEN HAD REPORTEDLY ORDERED FACTORY WORKERS TO STAY AWAY FROM WORK ON THAT DAY, AND PRO-EXECUTIVE

ASSEMBLYMEN AND TRADE UNION LEADERS COMPLAINED ABOUT IT. ON EVENING OF JANUARY 17 (LOYALIST) UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COUNCIL ANNOUNCED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO INDUSTRIAL ACTION OR STREET DEMONSTRATIONS, BUT THAT LOYALIST ASSEMBLYMEN WOULD DO THEIR DUTY ON JANUARY 22. DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST LEADER REV. IAN PAISLEY HAD PREVIOUSLY THREATENED THAT NO MEMBER OF EXECUTIVE WOULD EVER REACH DISPATCH BOX. EARLY CONFRONTATION SEEMED POSSIBLE OVER SEARING OF EXECUTIVE ON TRADITIONAL GOVERNMENT FRONT BENCH TO RIGHT OF SPEAKER AND OF OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN TO OTHER SIDE OF HOUSE, WHICH HAD BEEN PROVIDED IN ASSEMBLY STANDING ORDERS AT SUGGESTION OF DOCTOR PAISLEY.

2. ON JANUARY 22 BUILDING WAS SURROUNDED BY HEAVY SECURITY, INCLUDING RUC, MILITARY POLICE AND ARMY, SOME IN ARMoured CARS. PAISLEY AND TEN COLLEAGUES PROTESTED VEHEMENTLY TO NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY OF STATE PYM AGAINST THIS, BUT PYM REPLIED THAT HE HAD TO PROTECT ASSEMBLYMEN. WHEN ASSEMBLY SITTING BEGAN AT 2.30 PM LOYALISTS WERE CLUSTERED ON BENCHES TO RIGHT OF SPEAKER WHICH THEY HAD OCCUPIED SINCE ASSEMBLY BEGAN SITTING IN OLD STORMONT HOUSE OF COMMONS IN OCTOBER. AFTER PRAYERS EXECUTIVE CHIEF WHIP MADE POINT OF ORDER THAT EXECUTIVE HAD RIGHT TO OCCUPY GOVERNMENT FRONT BENCH AND SPEAKER TOLD LOYALISTS TO MOVE. DR. PAISLEY ROSE TO MAKE POINT OF ORDER (HE LATER SAID IT WAS THAT EXECUTIVE THAT WAS ILLEGITIMATE AND HAD NO RIGHT TO FRONT BENCH) BUT SPEAKER REFUSED TO TAKE IT. MEMBERS OF DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST AND VANGUARD UNIONIST PARTIES (VANGUARD LEADER CRAIG WAS ABSENT, REPORTEDLY ILL) THEN STAGED DRAMATIC PROTEST, AND SPEAKER ADJOURNED ASSEMBLY AND CALL ED ON RUC TO REMOVE LOYALISTS FROM CHAMBERS EIGHTEEN LOYALISTS WERE REMOVED AFTER NO LESS THAN FIVE ADJOURNMENTS. DR PAISLEY AND SEVERAL OTHERS FORCIBLY RESISTED REMOVAL, AND VANGUARD UNIONIST DR. KENNEDY LINDSAY SWUNG A LONG CHAIN AT OFFICIALS OF ASSEMBLY, CLAMBERED ATOP CLERKS TABLE TO DELIVERY HARANGUE ATTEMPTED TO CHAIN HIMSELF TO TABLE, AND FINALLY SPAT FULL IN FACE OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE BRIAN FAULKNER. OTHER LOYALISTS LEFT AFTER TOKEN OR NO RESISTANCE, AND ONLY ONE OR TWO MEMBERS OF ULSTER UNCLASSIFIED

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UNIONIST ASSEMBLY PARTY, (WHOSE LEADERS, HARRY WEST, HAD A FEW HOURS EARLIER BEEN ELECTED TO REPLACE BRIAN FAULKNER AS LEADER OF UNIONIST PARTY) WERE INVOLVED. ON TV OUTSIDE ASSEMBLY BUILDING PAISLEY AND OTHERS COMPLAINED THEY HAD NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO MAKE POINT OF ORDER AND HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO BRUTALITY. RUC LATER SAID IT HAD USED MINIMUM NECESSARY FORCE, AND FIVE CONSTABLES HAD BEEN INJURED.

3. BY ABOUT 4 PM LAST PROTESTER HAD BEEN REMOVED AND ASSEMBLY PROCEEDED WITH BUSINESS ON ORDER PAPER, MOSTLY QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS. FINANCE MINISTER HERBERT KIRK WAS FIRST EXECUTIVE MEMBER TO GET UP ON DISPATCH BOX, AND HIS ARRIVAL THERE, AS WELL AS THOSE OF OTHER MINISTERS, WAS WELCOMED BY HEARTFELT HEAR, HEAR FROM ASSEMBLYMEN. AMONG THOSE ASKING QUESTIONS,

AND THUS IMPLICITLY RECOGNIZING EXECUTIVE, WAS NORTH DOWN ASSEMBLYMAN (AND WESTMINSTER MP) JAMES ILFEDDER, NOMINAL ULSTER UNIONIST, WHO HAS SO FAR SAT ON OPPOSITION BACK BENCH AND PLAYED MAVERICK ROLE.

4. EXECUTIVE BLASTED LOYALISTS BEHAVIOUR AS DISGRACEFUL UNDEMOCRATIC AND UNCIVILIZED THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND IS IN REALITY ABOUT WHETHER WE AS A COMMUNITY CHERISH FREE INSTITUTIONS SUFFICIENTLY TO UPHOLD THEM. THERE WERE PRESENT IN ASSEMBLY TODAY MEMBERS (IE THE ULSTER) WHO NEITHER SUPPORT THE EXECUTIVE NOR PLAYED ANY PART IN THE DISGRACEFUL OR DISORDERLY PROCEEDINGS. WE BELIEVE THAT AMONGST THEM ARE SOME AT LEAST WHO SHARE OUR DISMAY AND DISGUST. IF THIS IS SO, THEIR VOICES SHOULD BE HEARD.

5. TV, EVENING JANUARY 22, PAISLEY CLAIMED THAT EXECUTIVE AND ASSEMBLY HAD BEEN ABLE TO CARRY ON ONLY AT THE POINT OF BRITISH BAYONETS. FAULKNER COUNTERED THAT PROTESTERS HAD ONLY BEEN ABLE TO DELAY ASSEMBLY BUSINESS FOR 90 MINUTES. HARRY WEST CLAIMED LOYALISTS HAD RIGHT TO PROTEST WHEN SPEAKER FAILED TO TAKE POINT OF ORDER, BUT SAID HIS OWN GROUP REJECTS PHYSICAL VIOLENCE IN ITS CAMPAIGN TO BRING DOWN EXECUTIVE ON OTHER HAND, ULSTER UNIONISTS ALSO REJECT ROLE OF NORMAL LOYAL OPPOSITION. LOYALIST ACTIONS WERE ROUNDLY CONDEMNED BY ALL LOCAL NEWSPAPERS, INCLUDING (UNIONIST) NEWS LETTER,

6. FOR JANUARY 23, SITTING OF ASSEMBLY, PRINCIPAL BUSINESS UNCLASSIFIED

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ON ORDER PAPER WAS AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS, TABLED TO SUSPEND ANY MEMBER CREATING DISTURBANCE OR INVOLVED IN PHYSICAL VIOLENCE FROM ASSEMBLY FOR 14 SITTINGS DAYS. WHEN SESSION OPENED, LOYALISTS HAD RELINQUISHED FRONT BENCH TO EXECUTIVE, BUT REMAINED CLUSTERED ON GOVERNMENT SIDE OF HOUSE. PAISLEY HAD POINT OF ORDER ABOUT ALLEGED FAILURE OF MOVERS OF AMENDMENT TO CONSULT WITH LOYALISTS BEFORE TABLING IT, AND SOME 13 OTHER LOYALISTS THEN MADE POINTS OF ORDER COMPLAINING THEY HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM ASSEMBLY WITHOUT BEING NAMED BY SPEAKER AND/OR WITHOUT HAVING ACTUALLY BEEN SITTING ON EXECUTIVE FRONT BENCH. SPEAKER REJECTED CHALLENGES TO USE OF HIS AUTHORITY ON PREVIOUS DAY BUT UNDERTOOK TO CONSIDER SOME OF POINTS RAISED. WEST THEN MADE STATEMENT DENOUNCING AND REFUSING TO RECOGNIZE UNDEMOCRATIC EXECUTIVE AND WITHDRAWING ULSTER UNIONISTS FROM DAY'S PARTICULAR POINTS. PAISLEY AND VANGUARD DEPUTY LEADER ERNEST BAURD MADE SIMILAR STATEMENTS AND LOYALISTS THEN WITHDREW, SHOUTING ABUSE AT PRO-EXECUTIVE ASSEMBLYMEN. JANUARY 23 SESSION CONTINUED WITH SOME QUESTIONS TO COMMERCE AND HOUSING MINISTERS, FOLLOWED BY DEBATE AND UNANIMOUS APPROVAL OF STANDING ORDER AMENDMENT.

7. LATER, LOYALISTS REITERATED REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM DAYS SITTING, BUT SAID THEY HAD NOT DECIDED TO PURSUE

FIRMLY ABSTENTIONIST POLICY. EXECUTIVE MEMBERS REGRETTED LOYALISTS WITHDRAWAL FROM ASSEMBLY, WHICH VOTERS HAD NEVER SANCTIONED, AND HOPED LOYALISTS WOULD RETURN IN NEAR FUTURE.

8. COMMENTS: A. IT IS CLEAR THAT LOYALISTS INTENDED TO DISRUPT JANUARY 22 SITTING, AND SPEAKER HAD TO CALL ON RUC TO REMOVE LOYALISTS FROM ASSEMBLY TO ALLOW IT TO CONTINUE ITS WORK WHATEVER TECHNICAL ERROS THERE MAY HAVE BEEN IN IMPLEMENTING THIS DECISION. BY SAME TOKEN, LOYALIST DISRUPTIONS ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS HAVE MADE IT QUITE OBVIOUS THAT SPEAKER NEEDS POWERS GIVEN HIM BY NEW STANDING ORDER TO DEAL MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH ACTUAL PHYSICAL ATTACKS AND DISRUPTIONS BY ANY GROUP.

B. HAVING PROMISED TO PREVENT EXECUTIVE FROM OPERATIONS, AND REPORTEDLY UNDER HEAVY PRESSURE FROM LOYALIST PARAMILITARY ELEMENTS TO PRODUCE RESULTS, LOYALIST ASSEMBLYMEN HAD NO PRACTICAL POLITICAL ALTERNATIVE TO DISRUPT EFFORTS OF JANUARY 22. BY SAME TOKEN, WITHDRAWAL FROM JANUARY 23 SITTING WAS NOT UNCLASSIFIED

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EFFECTIVE WAY LEFT OPEN TO THEM TO REFUSE RECOGNITION TO EXECUTIVE AND AT SAME TIME PRESERVE TACTICAL UNITY OF VARIOUS LOYALIST GROUPS IN ASSEMBLY.

C. EVENTS OF PAST FEW DAYS HAVE INCREASED POLARIZATION BETWEEN EXECUTIVE AND ITS ENEMIES. LOYALIST FAILURE TO PREVENT EXECUTIVE FROM TAKING FRONT BENCH AND ASSEMBLY ADOPTION OF TOUGH ANTI-DISRUPTION MEASURES HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT LOYALISTS CANNOT PREVENT EXECUTIVE FROM WORKING BY TACTICS WITHIN ASSEMBLY. BUT HEAVY SECURITY MEASURES USED TO SURROUND ASSEMBLY AND REMOVE LOYALIST ASSEMBLYMEN ON JANUARY 22 DID CONTRIBUTE TO IMPRESSION HERE THAT EXECUTIVE WAS IMPOSED ON NI PEOPLE BY HMG AND CAN BE KEP IN POWER ONLY BY BRITISH SECURITY FORCES. LOYALIST REFUSAL TO PLAY ROLE OF LOYAL OPPOSITION TENDS FURTHER TO DEPRIVE EXECUTIVE OF WIDE ACCEPTABILITY REQUIRED FOR GOVERNMENT BY CONSENT IN NI. BUT AT SAME TIME ABSTENTION, IF IT BECAME A POLICY WOULD LIMIT EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR ROLE AS LOYALIST LEADERS, CORRESPONDINGLY STRENGTHEN THAT OF PARAMILITARY ELEMENTS PENBERTHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 27 JUL 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, PARAMILITARY FORCES, PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, POLITICAL PARTIES, GENERAL STRIKES, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BELFAS00015
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 N /A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: BELFAST
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740175/abbrzbzk.tel
Line Count: 206
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: elyme
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 FEB 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 FEB 2002 by chappeld>; APPROVED <25-Nov-2002 by elyme>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: N.I. EXECUTIVE WINS PYRRHIC VICTORY OVER LOYALISTS.
TAGS: PINT, UK
To: STATE INFO LONDON
DUBLIN
USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005